



FLORIDA'S SYSTEM OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM POSITION PAPER
REPRESENTATIVE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STAKEHOLDERS

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Florida's System of Early Care and Education

Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program Position Paper

Representative of Early Childhood Stakeholders

Findings in research and beliefs about child welfare may vary, but the need for quality care is seldom disputed. However, the means by which the provision of care is delivered can often be a topic for debate. The implementation of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) in Florida is a critical issue with critically tangible meaning for the lives of children and families. Early childhood stakeholders in Florida convened to discuss best practices for pre-kindergarten based on research in this area and similar initiatives in other states in order to inform policymakers, key stakeholders, and community members on the logistics of UPK.

Presented below is a Position Paper that is representative of discussion on research and best practices among early childhood stakeholders in Florida. The following serves as an informational brief, containing an outline of concepts central to discussion on UPK. An outgrowth of this process was the development of sample program models, core values, guiding principles, and operational guidelines relevant to UPK. The content included in this brief is being put forward as a unified consensual position; however, individual participants may vary in degree of support on specific items.

PROCESS

Mayor Alex Penelas of Miami-Dade, convened a meeting of more than 500 early care and education stakeholders in Orlando on November 15, 2002 after the passage of the constitutional amendment. This was the first step in obtaining broad stakeholder input into the design of Florida's Universal Pre-Kindergarten program. The work of that group provided a foundation from which to refine further recommendations. It was recognized that a smaller workgroup would be required to engage in that process.

The Florida Children's Forum convened a smaller workgroup, subsequently referred to as the Early Childhood Education Workgroup (ECE/UPK Workgroup), in Tallahassee on three occasions for a total of five workdays, starting in December 2002 (Member list, Appendix A). Dr. Susan Wilkinson of Episcopal Children's Services, Jacksonville facilitated the sessions. While the Forum extended invitations to specific early care and education stakeholders to ensure broad representation, anyone who wished to participate was welcomed to do so and considered members. Workgroup members were representative of all areas of early care and education including: Florida Partnership for School Readiness, School Readiness Coalitions, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, professional early care and education provider associations, school board officials, private and faith-based child care providers, not-for-profit agencies, universities and advocates. Legislative staff were invited to attend. After each meeting, notes from the meeting were distributed to the field for input and reaction. Additionally, each member was asked to circulate the work completed at the December meeting to their respective constituencies and feedback was considered at the January meeting before developing this report.

Central to discussion of the ECE/UPK Workgroup were guiding principles, program administration/governance, core values/philosophy, and implementation components relevant to UPK. The workgroup was cautioned about offering their personal opinions as guiding principles. Instead, their task was to develop recommendations based on research. Members were given copies and excerpts from the following resources for their review and consideration (Supporting Research, Appendix B):

- Eager to Learn, (*Educating Our Preschoolers, 2000, Washington DC*)
- Neurons to Neighborhoods, (*The Science of Early Childhood Development, 2000*)
- Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study To Go To School, (*University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1999*)

- Carolina Abecedarian Project, (*Frank Porter Graham Child Development, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1999*)
- Facts in Action: Three Studies Find Quality Childcare Helps Kids, (*Early Education Clearing House, Boston, 2000*)
- High Scope Perry Pre-School Study Through Age 27, (*High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1993*)
- NICHD Study of Early Childcare, (*National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, April 1998*)

SCHOOL READINESS ACT

Statute 411.01

In addition to research and knowledge of best practices for children, the ECE/UPK Workgroup maintained a focus on the legislative intent of the School Readiness Act. The following excerpts were key to discussion, specifically focusing on the importance of an integrated, holistic approach.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

- (a) The Legislature recognizes that school readiness programs increase children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. It is the intent of the Legislature that such programs be developmentally appropriate, research-based, involve parents as their child's first teacher, serve as preventive measures for children at risk of future school failure, enhance the educational readiness of eligible children, and support family education. Each school readiness program shall provide the elements necessary to prepare at-risk children for school, including health screening and referral and an appropriate educational program.
- (b) It is the intent of the Legislature that school readiness programs be operated on a full-day, year-round basis to the maximum extent possible to enable parents to work and become financially self-sufficient.
- (c) ...that school readiness programs not exist as isolated programs, but build upon existing services and work in cooperation with other programs for young children, and that school readiness programs be coordinated and funding integrated to achieve full effectiveness.
- (d) ...that administrative staff at the state level for school readiness programs be kept to the minimum necessary to carry out the duties of the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, as the school readiness programs are to be locally designed, operated, and managed, with the Florida Partnership for School Readiness adopting a system for measuring school readiness; developing school readiness program performance standards, outcome measurements, and data design and review; and approving and reviewing local school readiness coalitions and plans.
- (e) ...that appropriations for combined school readiness programs shall not be less than the programs would receive in any fiscal year on an uncombined basis.
- (f) ...that school readiness programs coordinate and operate in conjunction with the district school systems. However, it is also the intent of the Legislature that the school readiness programs not be construed as part of the system of free public schools but rather as a separate program for children under the age of kindergarten eligibility, funded separately from the system of free public schools, utilizing a mandatory sliding fee scale, and providing an integrated and seamless system of school readiness services for the state's birth-to-kindergarten population.
- (g) ...that federal child care income tax credit be preserved for school readiness programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to frame a system that gives Florida's children maximum opportunities to enter school prepared to become successful learners, the ECE/UPK Workgroup developed the following *Guiding Principles* to direct its work. A carefully designed delivery system has as its end product children who have the social, emotional, physical and learning readiness skills shown to be predictors of school success. Therefore, the *Guiding Principles* were developed from common components that were identified as essential to early care and education in the seven previously cited research works (Supporting Research, Appendix B). Additionally, all *Guiding Principles* support the legislative intent of the School Readiness Act.

1. All children are capable of learning.
2. Communities must ensure that resources needed to achieve educational success are available for all children, regardless of race, disability/special health care need, economic status, or geographic location (urban/rural).
3. All children must be treated with respect and dignity in a safe environment that emphasizes trust, fairness, celebration of diversity as well as community, and freedom from threats to physical safety.
4. Children who are at greater risk of school failure are much more likely to succeed in school if they attend well-planned, high quality early care and education programs.
5. All children must have the materials and equipment necessary for learning.
6. All children must have access to high quality early care and education programs, regardless of setting, that contain the following components (correlated with greater program effects):
 - a. Cognitive, social-emotional, and motor development should be planned for in a complementary manner, as they are mutually supportive areas of growth requiring active attention in the preschool years;
 - b. Responsive interpersonal relationships with teachers that nurture young children's dispositions to learn;
 - c. Children are better prepared when exposed to a mix of whole-class, small group, and individual interaction with teachers
 - d. Low class size and low adult-child ratios.
7. Language development is related to early literacy learning. While no one curriculum or teaching approach is best, programs must include emergent literacy and numeracy skills to provide children with greater opportunities for learning and preparedness.
8. Programs assessment supports learning in early care and education through optimizing knowledge based on prior and current information, evaluating the course of development in any given child, and informing instructional design.
9. All partners in the educational process must be accountable for maintaining high quality standards for early care and education programs.
10. The professional development of teachers is related to the quality of early care and education programs and program quality predicts children's developmental outcomes.
11. Children are better prepared for school when their teachers have specific education/training in early care and education.
12. Management will adopt efficient and economic business practices, while providing for continuous improvement.

CORE VALUES FOR UPK:

Through discussion of the *Guiding Principles*, the ECE/UPK Workgroup identified *Core Values* central to the implementation of UPK in Florida. Regardless of the eventual delivery system selected, these are critical considerations for meeting the needs of Florida's children and families.

- Retain a single unified administrative structure for birth to 5, and school-age child care (do not separate out UPK from existing child care and school readiness programs)

- Implementation must not adversely impact birth to 3 and before/after school care
- Must be a private/public partnership that allows public, private, and faith-based providers to participate
- Parent choice options must be available and parent involvement must be incorporated to the maximum extent possible
- Scientific research-based curricula must be required and encompass a strong early literacy focus

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Based on the *Guiding Principles* and *Core Values*, the ECE/UPK Workgroup explored various models for governance that could be implemented. The task was to analyze several viable models and not necessarily arrive at consensus. A thorough dialogue was essential in making informed recommendations. Central to discussion of potential models was:

- Transition to adopted model for integration of UPK
- Long-range implementation strategies
- Role of infant, toddler, and school-age child care in the models

In addition to supporting the *Guiding Principles* and *Core Values*, the following were addressed in the consideration of model options:

- Delivery design/method (i.e. Head Start)
- Program components/standards
- Operational issues for implementation
- Funding – federal supplanting language as well as amendment language
- Federal/state policy as it relates to parent choice, serving children with disabilities, supplementing vs. supplanting, etc.
- Support the No Child Left Behind Act
- Define the proposed “system” – what other entities should be included in the scope of school readiness for the model? (i.e. Healthy Start, Development Disabilities Council, school-age).

Though there are many models and variations that were discussed, the following four models were distilled for the purpose of this report:

- **Model #1:** *Department of Education (DOE)* – The Florida Partnership for School Readiness would move to the Department of Education. The newly created unit would incorporate a school readiness along with the Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program.
- **Model #2:** *Bifurcated System* – The Florida Partnership for School Readiness would remain with the Agency for Workforce Innovation. The UPK program would be housed in the Department of Education.
- **Model #3:** *Office of Early Childhood Development and Literacy* – Office of Early Childhood Development and Literacy would report to the Governor (similar to Georgia’s Office of School Readiness). A state administrative entity would be needed to perform such functions as payroll, fiscal agent, etc.
- **Model #4:** *Agency for Workforce Innovation* – The Florida Partnership for School Readiness and UPK would both be housed in the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

The model discussion is captured on the following pages. (Note: *The work reflected in the models represents commentary from the ECE/UPK Workgroup*).

• MODEL 1 •

Descriptor:

- UPK and birth to 4 located in Department of Education under a single umbrella

Rationale:

- Including the programs under the Department of Education structure would imply that birth to 5 is an important component in the educational continuum for Florida's children

Local Coalitions / Role (if applicable):

- Could vary depending on the operational model

Universal Pre-K:

- Integrated into the birth to 5 system

General Comments:

- Consider development of a Chancellor of Early Childhood services, birth to 3rd grade
- Role of local coalitions could be streamlined by designating a lead agency to contract with local providers
- Change the coalitions current function to serve as an interagency council role regardless of governance structure
- Funding based on local community needs assessment as driven by local community planning processes

Strengths:

- State level structure
- Represents an integrated system
- Continuity from birth to K to 12
- Emphasizes educational focus
- Data systems could track child progress from birth through school.
- Full Time Equivalent could be a viable alternative to reimbursement
- Funding would keep local community involved and accountable
- There are existing models in school systems that are family focused

Challenges:

- Lack of funding to serve children for school readiness
- School systems could view this as a burden
- School systems may not view this model as a priority given their other K-12 priorities
- Dealing with additional federal funding requirements
- Transitioning to Full Time Equivalent from current reimbursement process
- Administration of funds/invoicing would be a new challenge from the state governance level
- The autonomy of school boards might make community involvement difficult
- Differing program standards and rules and regulations for child care and education
- Need for 12-month availability of services
- Organizational culture of the school system at the state and local level
- Concern about removing local decision-making and control
- Lack of control over dollars at the local level
- Does not foster holistic services at the state level (i.e. Healthy Start, Healthy Families)

Additional Notes:

Operationalization at the local level. Four options for the Department of Education organizational structure utilizing a state level Chancellor for birth to 5:

1. Work directly with the school readiness entity (local governing body) who would have administrative responsibilities of contract management, fiscal management etc.
2. Work directly with the local board of education. The school system would take over all of the functions of contract management, fiscal management, etc.
3. Work directly with the local school board for UPK. Local school board could oversee only school-based sites, or alternatively, school-based and contracted sites.
4. Work directly with the local school board for UPK. Central agencies could then be contracted for birth to 4 and coordinate work through an interagency council.

• MODEL 2 •

Descriptor:

Bifurcated system:

- Child Care (birth to 3) housed in Agency for Workforce Innovation
- UPK housed in Department of Education This system was not recommended by the Workgroup as it directly conflicts with the 1999 School Readiness legislation that integrates all services for children birth to 5 into a seamless system. This model has the potential to jeopardize the progress made towards that goal.

Rationale:

Maintaining two separate structures could clarify conflicting roles with regard to the purpose of child care and UPK, for example:

- Child care as a support system for parents to work
- UPK is a system to prepare children for school

General Comments:

- Model totally unsupported
- Revisions are needed to clearly address the problems existing in current model

Strengths:

- Clarification of each agency's mission and role
- Agency for Workforce Innovation mission: child care enables parents to work
- Department of Education mission: educate children
- Easier for Full Time Equivalent to be obtained for UPK
- Quality initiative component is likely to be stronger within Department of Education

Challenges:

- Lack of funding to serve children for school readiness
- State driven system with less reliance on local control
- Limited flexibility for families to access child care subsidies for extended day services
- Potential loss of parental choice
- Turf wars and parochialism could negatively impact children
- Short term approach lacking long term vision, i.e. emphasis on parent employment rather than impact on child development
- Cost savings would be adversely effected with two administrative structures at local level
- Fragmented; not a unified system
- Potentially burdensome on children and families requiring multiple services, i.e. wrap-around care
- Primary focus of Agency for Workforce Innovation is not on quality of programs
- Data collection challenge regarding tracking outcomes for children
- Could damage child care industry by reversing progress achieved in current system

• MODEL 3 •

Descriptor:

Office of Early Childhood Development and Literacy under the Executive Office of the Governor with an administrative agency

Rationale:

Creation of the Office of Early Childhood Development and Literacy provides autonomy and prominence of the programs and services for children birth to 5. Such a placement communicates that this is a priority for Governor Bush

Local Coalitions / Role (if applicable):

The local coalitions could be maintained but the administrative workload could be shifted to a state agency assigned for administrative purposes (i.e. fiscal management, invoicing); funding could be made available to coalitions for policy development, program improvement, quality assurance, and system coordination

General Comments:

- Ensures holistic approach with redefinition of school readiness
- Consideration must be given to local control/governance design
- Departure from current structure

Strengths:

- Stronger state direction
- Direct link to the Governor's office denotes higher priority
- Highly visible model denotes higher profile
- Model enables literacy to become a strong focus across age groups
- Potential to add other complimentary services and programs to develop a holistic approach for children and their families (Healthy Start, Healthy Families, etc.)

Challenges:

- Lack of funding to serve children for school readiness
- Administrative agency must be designated to act as funding agent
- Bureaucratic challenge due to rulemaking authority (regardless of administrative structure)

Additional Notes:

Office of Early Childhood Development & Literacy. The Office would operate out of a state agency and responsibilities would include: development of rules, standards, curriculum, professional development, literacy, birth to 5, and school-age programs. Structural considerations for this model are identified below:

- **Programs:** Children with disabilities, child care licensing, Head Start, Early Head Start, First Start, Even Start, Healthy Start, Healthy Families, child care training, nutrition services, etc.
- **Administrative Agency:** Responsible for contract administration, fiscal management, federal reporting, etc.
- **Local Administrative Agency:** Responsible for Child Care Resource and Referral, quality, fiscal, monitoring, etc.
- **Local coalition:** Provide funding for responsibilities related to policy development, program improvement, quality assurance, and system coordination.

• MODEL 4 •

Descriptor:

Child care and UPK operate under the Agency for Workforce Innovation through Florida Partnership for School Readiness

Rationale:

Maintains current system and does not create upheaval with the integration of a new funding stream to serve all four-year-olds in preschool program

Local Coalitions / Role (if applicable):

Continue to act in the same capacity

General Comments:

- Consideration should be given to streamlining the fiscal functions of the coalitions
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Strengths:

- Maintains progress towards a simplified point of entry
 - Supports continuity of care for all children in the family with wrap-around care availability
 - UPK could be streamlined with regard to how funding is administered to the local level
 - Maintains the ability to manage quality initiatives at the local level
 - Could serve to increase the educational component of child care
 - Builds on collaborative work
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Challenges:

- Lack of funding to serve children for school readiness
 - May adversely effect cost savings at the local level
 - Administering agency largely focused on workforce development
 - Streamlining payment systems for child care providers
 - Could possibly dilute the educational focus of UPK
 - Weak connection with Department of Education and school districts
 - Questioned accountability at local level
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Additional Notes:

- School systems serve as providers in the system along with early care and education providers in the community
- School readiness coalition will be responsible for insuring that funding flows through the agency for child care, UPK, Quality Initiatives, etc.
- Florida Partnership for School Readiness program staff will oversee regulation, policy, child care licensing, etc. Dollars for birth to 5 and UPK would go through this office
- Agency for Workforce Innovation will be the administrative agency
- Florida Partnership for School Readiness board will be the policy development board that governs the state level operations

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

After deliberation, the ECE/UPK Workgroup developed recommendations on implementation of the UPK system. The following *Operational Guidelines* identify key programmatic issues and offer solutions that are compatible with the *Guiding Principles* and *Core Values*:

Program Dosage

- **Hours per day:** A mixed-model approach varying in length of day from 3.5 – 6 hours with variable compensation for providing UPK based on length of day.
- **Extended day:** Child Care Resource and Referral services must be available to assist families in arranging for extended day services (hours of care beyond the 3.5 - 6 hours provided through UPK). Families not eligible for state subsidies will be responsible for the full cost of extended day services.
- **Days per year:** UPK offered a minimum of 180 days per year, with a 260 day availability option for families in need of year-round care.

Program Settings / Standards

- **Eligible settings:** Public, private, and faith-based organizations will be eligible settings for UPK. Family child care homes will be eligible UPK settings if structured to serve only 4-year-old children.
- **Licensing:** Participating programs will need to meet licensing standards but not necessarily be licensed (if license-exempt). Participating school systems will use the Uniform Building Code in lieu of child care licensing standards. Family child care homes will follow the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation standards and be licensed to ensure minimal health and safety standards.
- **Environmental/Program Standards:** UPK programs would meet specific standards determined locally, but meet a minimum of identified statewide standards. Policies and procedures need to be developed concerning noncompliance. A mentoring system will be available to ensure compliance with UPK standards and continually enhance program quality.
- **Teacher/child ratios:** Ratios should be set in accordance with recommended ratios of the leading national accreditation bodies: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for center-based programs (recommended ratio 1:10) and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) for family child care homes (recommended ratio 1:6).
- **Group size:** Maximum group size of 20 children per classroom environment. Group size should be in accordance with NAEYC and NAFCC recommendations. Requirements of the class-size amendment may impact this recommendation.
- **Accountability:** Development of a statewide monitoring process and tool will be necessary to examine all programs consistently.

Educational Structure

- **Curriculum:** Any curriculum designed or selected must meet performance standards and a state-level approval process (similar to Georgia model). Curricula must be developed from scientifically-based research and be developmental- and age- appropriate.
- **Assessment:** Ongoing assessment of child progress will be necessary for ensuring optimal child development and learning outcomes.

Evaluation

- **Program evaluation:** Program evaluation will be a necessary component for continuous quality improvement through system analysis. The development of the evaluation process will need to include, but not be limited to: baseline data from the onset of UPK; measurement of pre-literacy skills with a scientifically-based research instrument; portfolios of all children's developmental progress; and reports on the impact of transitions from one program to an-

other on children's development and learning through grade 12. Child outcomes will be measured by pre/post assessment of children (gain scores). Feedback will be available to all providers and if appropriate, will be used to develop an action plan. The mentoring system will provide technical assistance to improve services.

Teacher Qualifications / Staff

- **Staff:** A UPK teacher must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) with the stipulation that teachers must acquire an associate's degree in the area of early childhood education by 2010 and a bachelor's degree by 2015 and participate in a mentorship process (mentor must have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related field). Principals or directors will have a minimum of 6 hours of coursework in early care and education or child development.

Professional Development

- **Teacher training:** Twenty hours of annual in-service training will be required with a specified number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Teachers will have additional access to CEU credit by obtaining CEU status of the Department of Children and Families required training, as well as increasing availability of community-based training with CEU credit.
- **Mentor system:** Ongoing training and technical assistance will be provided by degreed mentors. Mentors will provide guidance to a specified number of classrooms.
- **Career ladders:** Articulation, or the development of a career path, will be necessary for meeting UPK teacher qualifications. Staff salary and benefits will be commensurate with levels of education.
- **Scholarship:** Expansion of T.E.A.C.H.[®] program to encompass bachelor's level models will be needed to support education requirements for UPK teachers.

Parent Involvement /Education

- **Minimum standards:** UPK programs will be required to encourage parent involvement through participation in: parent teacher conferences, parent meetings, parent advisory committee, parent education activities emphasizing family literacy, and in daily program activities. Funding enhancements would allow routine communications to parents and two home visits per year in addition to above criteria.

Comprehensive Services

- **Family Support Specialists:** UPK staff will screen children and make referrals to Family Support Specialists who will be available to assist families in accessing needed services for children to include: health, dental, vision, mental health, hearing, as well as access to other resources such as nutrition, media services, etc. When necessary, a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of children's needs will be performed by the appropriate service provider. Resources and services will follow the child where possible.

System Design

- **Communications:** Management Information Systems will need to be strengthened to support the implementation and operation of UPK, such as use of a unified statewide system for data with a single point of entry that incorporates the tracking of student records.
- **Reimbursement:** Full Time Equivalent funding will be based on hours per day and will be paid monthly. To ensure maximal use of funds, contracts will be negotiated for a specific number of children. Additional checks and balances will include monthly attendance records with a required 80 percent Average Monthly Attendance. Modern technology offers options, such as the thumbprint scan to validate attendance. Non-compliance will result in reduction

of payment. Potential options for timely provider payments include a debit card system or an electronic funds transfer.

- **Enhancements:** Consideration will be given to developing a statewide accreditation system for Florida and rated licensure (similar to NC star system).

Funding

- **Resources:** Dollars must be adequate to fund the level of quality needed to ensure optimal development and learning outcomes for children. Significant additional resources are needed to meet this mandate. If necessary, additional funding sources will be explored.

ATTACHMENT A

ECE/UPR Workgroup Member List

ECE / UPK Workgroup Participants

The following individuals attended one or more of the work sessions in the preparation of this report.

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ATTACHMENT B

Supporting Research

Bowman, B.T., Donovan, M.S., & Burns, M.S. (Eds) (2001). *Eager To learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, National Research Council.

The Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy was established in 1997 by the National Research Council to study a broad range of research on early learning and development and to explore the implications for the education and care of children ages 2 to 5, focusing on programs provided outside the home. Major findings document the importance of high quality care and education beginning early in life, and the significance of the teacher-child relationship, the organization and content of the curriculum, teacher preparation, assessment of teaching and learning, and the needs of children most at risk of school failure.

Shonkoff, J.P. & Phillips, D.A. (Eds) (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

The Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development reviewed an extensive, multi-disciplinary, and complex body of research covering the period from before birth to entry into kindergarten to generate an integrated science of early childhood development and the role of early experiences. The result of the committee's review, this book synthesizes the literature, elaborates on a number of core concepts of development, and offers recommendations for policy and practice. The committee's conclusions and recommendations are grounded in four overarching themes: (1) all children are born wired for feelings and ready to learn; (2) early environments matter, and nurturing relationships are essential; (3) society is changing, and the needs of young children are not being addressed; and (4) interactions among early childhood science, policy, and practice are problematic and demand dramatic rethinking.

Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team (1999). *The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school*. Technical report. University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, NC.

The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study (CQO) (1995) was designed to examine the influence of typical center-based child care on children's development during their preschool years and as they move into formal elementary education. This report (1999) details the results through the end of second grade and presents implications that follow from the findings and makes recommendations for policy and practice. The report concludes that high quality child care experiences, in terms of both classroom practices and teacher-child relationships, enhance children's abilities to take advantage of educational opportunities as they enter kindergarten and throughout the early elementary school years.

Carolina Abecedarian Project (1999). Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, NC.

The Carolina Abecedarian Project was a carefully controlled scientific study of the potential benefits of early childhood education for low-income children. Children from low-income families received full-time, high-quality educational intervention in a childcare setting from infancy through age 5. Activities focused on social, emotional, and cognitive areas of development but gave particular emphasis to language. Children's progress was monitored over time with follow-up studies conducted at ages 12, 15, and 21. Findings demonstrate that important, long-lasting benefits were associated with

participation in the early childhood program. Accordingly, the Abecedarian study provides scientific evidence that early childhood education significantly improves the scholastic success and educational attainments of poor children even into early adulthood.

***Facts in Action: Three Studies Find Quality Child Care Helps Kids.* (2000). Early Education Clearinghouse: Boston, MA.**

Three studies were reviewed: The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study; the Carolina Abecedarian Project; and the NICHD Study of Early Child Care. Findings from all three studies support the hypothesis that quality early childhood education positively influences children's future academic achievement as well as social skills and behavior.

Important findings include (a) children who attended high quality child care programs demonstrated enhanced cognitive development, a higher degree of school readiness, and more positive social behaviors than those who attended lower quality programs, and (b) the positive effects of child care can benefit children into early adulthood.

Schweinhart, L.J. et al. (1993). *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27.* Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (No. 10). High/Scope Educational Research Foundation: Ypsilanti, MI.

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project is a longitudinal study assessing the effect of high-quality, active learning preschool programs on both short- and long-term benefits to children living in poverty and at high risk of school failure. For almost three decades, the study has followed the lives of 123 such children from African-American families who lived in the neighborhood of Perry Elementary School in Ypsilanti, Michigan, in the 1960s. Study findings at age 27 indicate that the preschool participants have significantly higher earnings, rates of home ownership, and levels of schooling, as well as significantly fewer arrests and social service interventions, than a control group of non-preschool participants. Cost-benefit analysis revealed that, over the lifetimes of the participants, the preschool program returned to the public an estimated \$7.16 for every dollar spent.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2002). *Study of early child care.* United States Department of Health and Human Services: Washington DC.

In April 2001, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care released its latest, preliminary findings on early child care and children's development prior to school entry. Findings confirm that quality child care has a direct impact on both children's cognitive and language development and successful transitions to school.

The study found that children in higher-quality care score higher on tests of vocabulary and short-term memory and attention than did children in lower-quality care. Children in higher-quality care also scored higher on tests of cognitive skills and language ability. In addition to child developmental outcomes, the study examined the effects of structural aspects of child care, such as adult-to-child ratios and teacher training, on child developmental outcomes. The findings show that such structural features improve the overall quality of child care and are linked to children's positive intellectual and social development.